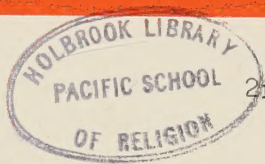


ECUMENICAL PRESS SERVICE

Published under the auspices of the : World Council of Churches · International Missionary Council
World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations · World Young Women's Christian Association
World's Student Christian Federation · World Council of Christian Education · United Bible Societies

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No. 34/27th Year



2nd September, 1960

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WCC Central Committee Plans For Future

(St. Andrews, Scotland) - Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox church leaders, gathered in the university town of St. Andrews, Scotland, for the 90-member Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches, August 16-24, made recommendations which will have far reaching effects on the churches as they seek to express their unity in Christ.

Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the Council, summed up the meeting as one of the "most productive" held since the Committee was elected in 1954.

Changes Proposed in WCC Basis

A revised statement of the basis for membership in the World Council of Churches has been approved by the Council's policy-making Central Committee.

The new statement will be recommended by the Committee to the Council's Third Assembly to be held November 17 - December 5, 1961, in New Delhi. The Assembly is the only body which can take final action in making such a change. The suggested change will be circulated to all the WCC's 178 member churches in advance of the Assembly for their consideration. Final acceptance requires a two-thirds majority of the Assembly.

Present membership is based on acceptance of "our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour".

The new statement declares: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

In accepting the new statement the Central Committee emphasized the freedom of the churches to make changes required in translating it into other languages.

It was pointed out, for instance, that the use of the word "together" following the word "fulfil" in the English version of the statement is redundant in the German language and the word "together" would not be included in the statement when it is sent to the German churches.

The new basis was prepared by a special Central Committee sub-committee which has been working on its reformulation since the last Assembly of the World Council in 1954.

Suggestion for a change, asking for mention of the Scriptures, came initially from the Church of Norway. Requests for changes also came later from the Orthodox churches and others, who asked that the criterion for membership should be brought more explicitly into line with the doctrine of the Trinity.

A statement accompanying the proposed change noted that the basis of the World Council "has never been thought of as a creed, nor as offering a full statement of the Christian faith". It describes it as "functional" with its only purpose as saying "what holds us together in the World Council, what is the starting point of our conversation and the foundation of our collaboration".

It added that the suggested expansion "does no more than make explicit what has all along been implicit in the present Basis, but that it meets the general desire to include a reference to the Scriptures and to the Three Persons of the Undivided Trinity and at the same time to emphasize in biblical language the central purpose governing the association together of the member churches of the World Council".

Faith and Order

The Central Committee also took action to bring the concerns of the Commission on Faith and Order more centrally into the work of the World Council. It authorized the enlargement of Faith and Order's present executive staff from one to three, urged it to take a more active role in regional faith and order conferences and authorized it, when invited, to provide consultative services to merging churches. It also gave approval to a statement of the Faith and Order Commission's triennial meeting held in St. Andrews in early August.

The statement declares that the unity sought "is not one of uniformity nor a monolithic power structure" and that it is primarily a local unity or "one which brings all in each place who confess Christ Jesus as Lord into a fully committed fellowship with one another ..." (See also EPS No. 32)

Intercommunion and Youth

Divergent attitudes on the subject of intercommunion were expressed on the final day of the Central Committee's meeting. The subject came before the Committee when it was asked to receive the findings of the European Ecumenical Youth Assembly held at Lausanne, Switzerland, in July.

A message unanimously adopted by the 1,800 young people there called on churches to make more progress towards intercommunion. The message said "we are going home as Christians who have experienced what it means not to be able to become one at the Lord's Table, and who do not want to shrug off this pain or conceal this guilt from themselves". They demanded that their own churches and the World Council "work seriously toward the establishment of an increasingly inclusive intercommunion".

Members of the committee took different views on whether the Council could go further than a formula established at the World Faith and Order conference in Lund, Sweden, 1952, which said that open communion services at ecumenical gatherings should be held where possible on the invitation of a local church or churches which sanction such services.

The WCC's Central Committee, after discussion, agreed to a resolution which said it received the findings of the Lausanne Assembly "and rejoices in the seriousness and enthusiasm with which the young people have addressed themselves to the issues of church disunion and church unity". It expressed the hope that the churches will "give careful attention to that part of the findings which deals with communion services at ecumenical gatherings". And it confirmed that the present position of the WCC is that laid down in the Lund statement.

Religious Liberty

Another main topic on the agenda of the Central Committee was religious liberty. Two long reports were prepared by different commissions.

The report of the commission dealing with "Christian Witness, Proselytism, and Religious Liberty" was adopted with only minor changes and sent to the churches. The report outlined eleven suggested standards of practice for member churches.

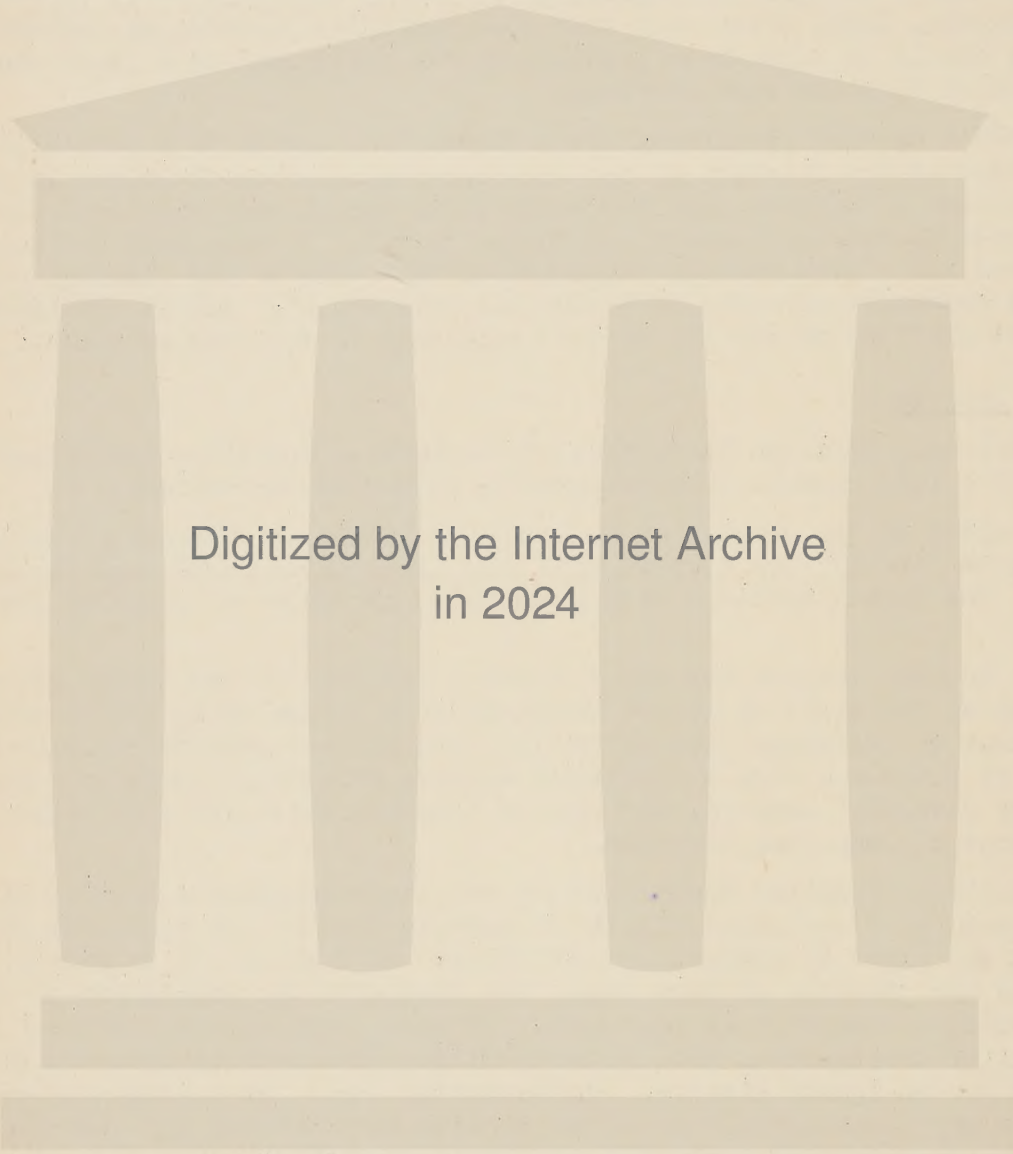
These include respect for other churches and help to rise above shortcomings, recognition of the right of mature individuals to change their church allegiance, establishment of religious liberty for all churches and members in every land, disavowal of pressure, care in receiving members who change churches because of "worldly or unworthy" motives, and help to churches which are weak rather than establishment of competing missions.

The Central Committee decided to ask the other commission dealing with the basis and nature of religious liberty to work further on its statement and revise it in the light of suggestions submitted. It decided not to submit the document to the churches at this stage, but requested the commission to report to the Executive Committee in June 1961. It asked that some theological issues receive fuller treatment as well as difficulties presented to governments by the demand for religious liberty. The Committee asked for a clear statement on the reasons why a re-examination of the problem is necessary and also for application to contemporary situations of findings reached.

Parenthood and Population

After lively debate on a proposed statement on the family and planned parenthood, the Committee rejected a longer statement and confined itself to requesting member churches to continue to examine the problems involved in ecumenical discussion.

The Committee transmitted to member churches speeches made before it by Bishop Stephen F. Bayne, Jr., executive officer of the Anglican Communion's Lambeth Conference of Bishops, and by Dr. Egbert de Vries, of the Netherlands, an agricultural economist. (See EPS No. 33)



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Discussion in the Committee made it apparent that Orthodox delegates did not share the views of many Protestant and Anglican churches on this matter. Russian Orthodox Bishop John of San Francisco said he found nothing in the Bible about planned parenthood. He said "if we go the countries of Asia not taking the pure word of God but mixing it up with sophistication of other kinds, I can't believe God will bless our work".

"Responsible Independence" in Africa Urged

In a message to its member churches in Africa the Central Committee called upon them to assist in the "orderly and peaceful transition" of new nations to "responsible independence".

Adopted without dissenting vote the message urged the churches to give "strong support to the United Nations as well as to governments" in bringing this about. It regretted "those instances in which violence and apparent irresponsibility, on one side or the other, have jeopardized the transition to independence" and urged the rights of persons, regardless of race, to share in the formation of their governments. (Full text of the statement is on page 8)

It offered the WCC's services to the churches and noted the Council will convene a consultation December 7-14 in Johannesburg, of its eight member churches in the Union of South Africa, to discuss relations with each other and seek an "understanding of the meaning of the Gospel for relations between the races".

The WCC's delegation to the Johannesburg meeting will be: Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, chairman of the Central Committee; Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary; Dr. Wilhelm Niesel, Germany, Reformed; Mr. Charles Parlin, USA, Methodist; Bishop Lakdasa De Mel, Ceylon, Anglican; Sir Francis Ibiam, Nigeria, Presbyterian. Dr. Robert S. Bilheimer, WCC associate general secretary, will act as secretary to the delegation.

Action Requested on China

Action to "help in the creation of conditions which will permit the 650 million people of China to share in the benefits and accept the responsibility common to all members of the international community" was urged in another statement.

The statement said certain measures "especially in relation to disarmament and nuclear weapons testing, can be effectively applied only if the people and government of China are in a position to contribute to their formulation and application".

The brief 75-word statement did not specifically name the People's Republic of China nor membership in the United Nations. It asked that study and action be undertaken by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, a joint WCC and International Missionary Council agency. It will be referred to WCC member churches.

Dr. O.F. Nolde, CCIA director, gave a five-point explanation of the meaning of the statement:

1. The statement recognises as artificial and dangerous a situation where 650 million people are isolated from the rest of the world. The danger increases the longer the artificiality persists.
2. No adequate treaty on disarmament or the cessation of nuclear weapons testing is possible unless the government in effective power on the mainland of China is party thereto.

3. The statement implies that other governments should have diplomatic dealings with the government in effective power and does not imply that such dealings place upon that government a stamp of approval.

4. The people of China should be in a position to share in the benefits and accept the responsibilities common to all members of the international community. Both benefits and responsibilities should be stressed as important.

5. The situation in Tibet, the border dispute with India, the ideological conflict between Moscow and Peking about the desirability or inevitability of world war - these and other factors suggest the existence of conditions which militate against an immediate solution of the China problem. Nevertheless, if the Central Committee at this time urges action which would be helpful in the creation of conditions favourable to the responsible participation of China in the international community, it will not only underscore the goal to be sought but will also voice a sense of urgency in encouraging measures to speed its achievement.

Eight New Churches Join World Council

Eight new churches were received into the membership of the World Council of Churches at the annual meeting of the Central Committee. With the recognition of the merger of three member churches into the American Lutheran Church, the figure of World Council member churches - Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox - becomes 178. The new churches become full members in six months.

Churches received include six Protestant churches in Asia and Africa, a newly independent Anglican church in East Africa, and the ancient Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East.

Protestant churches received are: The Evangelical Church of Madagascar, the London Missionary Society Synod in Madagascar, the Evangelical Church of Togo, the Sundanese Christian Church of West Java, the Methodist Church of Ghana (subject to approval of the WCC basis and receiving full autonomy next summer), and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (subject to formal confirmation of the basis).

The newly autonomous Church of the Province of East Africa (Anglican) has five dioceses in Kenya and Tanganyika with 400 African clergy. It has a membership of 150,000 full communicants with a total Christian community of 320,000.

The Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East is an ancient church which includes members from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Eastern Turkey and North and South America. Its membership is estimated at about 700,000. There are nearly 800,000 Syrian Orthodox in India who are already related to the Council through the membership of the Catholicate of the Orthodox Syrian Church of Malabar.

The two new Protestant churches from Madagascar are now conducting conversations concerning church union. The Evangelical Church of Madagascar is an outgrowth of work started by the Paris Mission Society in 1820. It has 50,148 full communicants and 265,935 registered Protestants. The other church, the London Missionary Synod in Madagascar, is fully independent from its parent mission body. It has a membership of 62,000 full members and 319,000 adherents.

The Evangelical Church of Togo started from work conducted by a German mission in 1820 and has been linked since World War I with the Paris Mission Society. It became autonomous in December 1959. It has 12,000 communicants and 40,000 constituents.

The Sundanese Church in West Java, which became autonomous in 1934, is the outgrowth of mission work started among the Moslem population in 1862. There are 9,300 members. It exists in an area of twelve million Moslems.

The Methodist Church in Ghana becomes autonomous in August 1961. The membership application came before the Central Committee now because there is to be no meeting of the committee before the Third Assembly in India next November. The church grew out of British Methodist missionary work begun in 1935. Today there are 51,000 full members with a constituency of 153,000.

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea was organised in May 1953, following a secession from another Korean Presbyterian church. It has been closely related to the United Church of Canada. It has 191,000 members and belongs to the East Asia Christian Conference and the World Presbyterian Alliance.

The three member churches which have merged into The American Lutheran Church are the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the American Lutheran Church. The council of the new church decided to fulfil the obligations of WCC membership and the Central Committee took note of the merger, and recognised the new church as a constituent member. Thus the Council's 172 member churches were reduced to 170, and with the addition of the eight other churches the figure becomes 178. EPS, Geneva

WSCF Holds General Committee Meeting in Greece

(Salonica, Greece) - A programme of teaching and study on the life and mission of the church will be continued by the World Student Christian Federation until 1963, according to a major decision taken by the organisation's General Committee in session from August 9-23 in Salonica, Greece.

During the next three years ten regional conferences emphasizing leadership training and strategy for action will be held, as a follow-up of the world-wide teaching conference held by the WSCF in Strasbourg this July (see EPS Nos. 28 and 29).

Three study commissions, on education, politics and community, reported to the General Committee. While recommending that serious attention be given to defining the theological significance of education and the need for a renewal of theological education both of the clergy and the laity, the committee decided that major attention should go to problems of education in a technological civilization. A book will be prepared on the subject.

Turning to politics, the committee set up a new commission directed to stimulate political thinking and action among Federation members. The General Committee expressed its concern for the control of armaments and of efforts for disarmament, and commended the action of nations refusing the possession of nuclear weapons. At the same time the committee affirmed the freedom and right of nations to refuse to align themselves with either side in the cold war. The need for conversation between Christians in the East and the West was stressed.

The General Committee rejected all forms of segregation and discrimination based on race and asked member movements within the WSCF to examine their own organisation patterns in order to become aware of segregation and to work for its removal. A special study commission on race was set up.

Turning to the Christian community, the committee said that the Christian fellowship on the campus must be university centred, ecumenical and open. It

recommended that efforts be continued for conversation with "conservative evangelical" groups and decided to send a message to Pax Romana (Roman Catholic international student movement) expressing interest and joy at recent developments within the Roman Catholic Church towards ecumenical conversation and greater unity. A study commission was appointed.

A full-time staff member will be appointed to expand and strengthen the WSCF's programme of ecumenical assistance. Aided by a committee of experts, he will explore needs and resources, both in cash and personnel.

The Rev. Valdo Galland, associate general secretary, was named to succeed Mr. Philippe Maury, who ends his term as general secretary in a few months. The Rev. Philip Potter of the West Indies and now on the staff of the World Council of Churches, was named WSCF chairman, succeeding the Rev. D.T. Niles of Ceylon. The vice-chairmen are Father Hazim, Orthodox, of Lebanon, Professor Masao Take-naka of Japan, and Mr. Burgess Carr, student from Liberia. Mr. Maury and the Rev. Henry Hetland, USA, are the treasurers. EPS, Geneva

Cardinal Bea Wants "Dialogue" with Non-Catholics

(Riedböhringen, Germany) - Cardinal Augustin Bea, secretary of the Vatican's new Secretariat for Christian Unity, advocated intensified conversation between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christians at a meeting in late August here in his home town, in the Baden district.

The cardinal said it was most important for unofficial dialogue between the confessions, that had been going on before his secretariat was set up last June, to continue. He said these meetings between theologians had led to a certain amount of agreement and mentioned the work of the German "Una Sancta" group directed by Roman Catholic Archbishop Lorenz Jäger of Paderborn.

(The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches reported to the Council's Central Committee at St. Andrews, Scotland, two weeks ago, that it hoped "informal discussions between Roman Catholic theologians and those of other churches which have been going on will not be superseded by more official discussions. At the present stage", said the WCC Executive, "it is precisely these informal discussions which can best contribute to removing misunderstanding.")

Cardinal Bea also said that a two-way conversation could be established between his secretariat and the World Council of Churches on some questions concerned with the Christian faith, but he pointed out that each member church of the WCC must make its own decisions independently about any closer relationships with the Church of Rome.

Referring to the composition of the Vatican's unity secretariat, the Cardinal said it would include at least two members from each country where there were considerable non-Catholic Christian communities. The aim would be to facilitate a two-way flow of information - on local non-Catholic groups to the Secretariat, and from the Secretariat the facts about Roman Catholicism. The exchange of information will try to prepare for later talks. "Corresponding members" will also be appointed to keep in touch with the Secretariat.

According to the Swiss Roman Catholic international newsagency KIPA, the Secretariat might be retained as a continuing body in Rome after the close of the Second Vatican Council. EPS, Geneva

In Brief

James W. Wine, associate general secretary for interpretation of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, has resigned to become special assistant for community relations in US Senator John Kennedy's presidential campaign organisation. Mr. Kennedy said the Protestant layman will head a special section at the Senator's headquarters which will answer questions from the public raised by his membership in the Roman Catholic Church, his statements on church-state matters and similar issues.

* *

Leading German Evangelical missionaries took part in ceremonies in East Africa on August 28, marking the formal constitution of the Buhaya Evangelical Church as the independent Evangelical Church of North-West Tanganyika. The Buhaya Church was founded fifty years ago with the assistance of the German Evangelical Bethel Mission.

* *

A Papuan priest has been named as the assistant bishop in the Anglican diocese of New Guinea. The Rev. George Ambo will be consecrated in Brisbane, Australia, later in the year, according to an announcement from the Australian Board of Missions. The new bishop's diocese is in the Anglican Province of Queensland.

* *

The Rev. A.E. Inbanathan has been appointed general secretary of the Bible Society of India and Ceylon, succeeding the late Mr. P. Mahanty. The society will celebrate its 150th anniversary next year. Plans are under way to issue for the first time translations of the Bible in the languages used in Assam, a north-east province of India. The Rev. Celestine Fernando is the new secretary of the society's Ceylon Auxiliary.

* *

Two new films just released by the World Council of Churches for international distribution were selected for showing at this year's International Film Festival in Edinburgh. They are "As the Nightingale Waits for the Summer", a WCC production telling the story of Russian Old Believers resettled in Brazil, and "Rennies Mill", a British Council of Churches film about destitute Chinese living in a hillside shanty town in Hong Kong.

EPS, Geneva

Document IResponsible Independence in AfricaA Statement made by the Central Committee of
the World Council of Churches, August, 1960.

"Believing in both freedom and order under the sovereignty of Christ, the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches takes special cognizance of the situation in Africa. It rejoices in the achievement of responsible independence on the part of several former colonies within the last five years, and in the prospect that the peoples of other territories will reach the same goal within the near future. It regrets those instances in which violence and apparent irresponsibility, on one side or the other, have jeopardised the transition to independence. The Central Committee is aware of the special burdens and responsibilities which rest upon Christians of Africa as their countries enter into new nationhood.

Where nations are still subject to minority or foreign rule, it reaffirms the conviction that they must be allowed to move swiftly but with adequate preparation to a form of government in which persons of whatever racial background have their rightful share.

Insofar as racial differences enter into the struggle for independence or the constitution of new states, the Central Committee calls attention to the declaration of the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in which it stated "its conviction that any form of segregation based on race, colour or ethnic origin is contrary to the Gospel, and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the Church of Christ". The Assembly urged the churches within its membership "to renounce all forms of segregation or discrimination and to work for their abolition within their own life and within society". The Central Committee notes with gratification that important steps in this direction have been made in various areas.

The Central Committee calls on the churches to give strong support to the United Nations as well as the governments concerned in their efforts to insure that the transition to responsible independence takes place in an orderly and peaceful manner.

The Central Committee takes note of the multi-racial Conference on Areas of Rapid - Social Change in the Union of South Africa in December of 1959; of the inter-racial political consultation sponsored by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs in the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in recent months; of the work in West Africa of the Department on the Co-operation of Men and Women; of the continuing ecumenical studies on the Christian responsibility in areas of rapid social change in many churches in Africa; and of the mission to Leopoldville sent in recent days by the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches to appraise the situation in consultation with local leaders and to discover appropriate means of assistance by churches and their agencies in other lands - means now being developed on an emergency basis.

The Central Committee has approved plans at its present meeting for the continuation of efforts towards reconciliation and financial and technical assistance in Africa in the immediate future. It welcomes the prospect of a consultation of the member churches in South Africa with a delegation from the World Council itself in December 1960. A study of "The Christian Responsibility in an Independent Nigeria" will begin in the immediate future. The Central Committee proffers the services of the World Council of Churches to the churches and national councils in Africa, including those churches admitted to membership at this meeting of the Central Committee, as they seek to give leadership and to promote self-discipline in their nations. It very much hopes that the All Africa Church Conference may play a significant role as the destinies of the continent and its respective peoples are shaped.

Many former theories and programmes of the churches and missions in Africa are being altered drastically at the present time. The Central Committee recognises the great contributions made by these mission and churches, under God, to the life and faith of the African peoples, and it prays for God's guidance as they redefine their policies and practices for the future. Together with all Christians everywhere, it shares the anguish of those churches and peoples suffering in this period of upheaval. It assures the churches of Africa of continuing fellowship in Christ and constant prayer for the emerging nation of Africa."

Document IIMoscow Patriarch Greet's WCC

The document which follows is the full text of the message sent to the Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches at St. Andrews, Scotland, by Patriarch Alexis of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (see EPS No. 32).

"Greetings to you, dear leaders and participants in the meeting dedicated to the great cause of Christian unity. May God's blessing be upon your work, and your efforts towards the end that all Christians throughout the world may "be of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32).

Praying continually for the "peace of the whole world" and for the uniting of all men under our Lord Jesus Christ, the Russian Orthodox Church is closely following the developments in the movement of the divided western and eastern Christians towards church unity. She looks forward with hope to the day when they will share in the fullness of Faith.

And now, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the birth of the ecumenical movement, we give our blessing to our observers attending the present session of the Central Committee. We charge them fully to acquaint themselves with the substance of its decisions and with the spirit in which these are taken so that we may be enabled to contribute towards Christian unity "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect union, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph.4:13).

Believing in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, founded by our Lord Jesus Christ and protected by His promises, we know that many Christians, influenced by different teachings, political differences and national hostilities, and divided from each other by barriers of mistrust, have separated themselves from each other choosing different directions at crossroads of history. Much time was lost before Christians began to realize their responsibility for this disunity and its consequences, but this finally led to the rise of the ecumenical movement and the constitution of the WCC and its various organisations.

When we look at the different stages in this movement we can compare it with the stream of people who are seeking to find a way towards the unity of the Church of Christ - the unity which they have lost. Thus we can only rejoice when Christians, in the search for this way, come together in a common effort to reach "one mind" in resolving questions which separate not only themselves but all mankind. By doing so, they confess the guilt of this dividedness.

We rejoice that the WCC considers its most urgent task to be the achievement of "oneness of mind" and the co-operation between the Christian churches so as to satisfy and remove the most vital needs of mankind.

Moved by Christian love, this action gradually leads to the ground where Christians really come nearer to each other, realizing the strength of fellowship as an expression of unity in Christ.

Love, which is ready to sacrifice, will indeed overcome many distortions of the faith which have hitherto prevented Christian unity. It is hardly necessary to say that, in our time as never before, Christians should be unanimous not only in furthering the highest efforts of mankind but also in the struggle against the threat of destructive war.

Despite a general longing for peace, there has never been on earth such an accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, the production of which absorbs man's creative forces and his riches. There has never before been such a real danger of a sudden outburst of war.

This is why Christian oneness of mind could become a force able to lessen the present sharp division of the world.

By united action Christians could contribute to the abolition of nuclear and other kinds of deadly weapons.

The resolution of the most difficult problem of general disarmament, not to mention the day-to-day fight against hunger, poverty and disease, depends to a great extent on united Christian action.

Calling the participants in your meeting, and through them all Christians, to the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4:3) we wish the WCC every success in its efforts and in its search for ways of co-operation towards the peaceful organisation of human life and Christian unity, to the end that "they all may be one".

May our Lord send us new apostles who shall again enlighten the world with the supreme light of the truth of Christ, so that in the end the whole Christian world, hitherto divided, will, according to the unalterable word of the Gospel, unanimously submit itself to God in spirit and in truth; and that all believers may reach unity of faith, together glorifying the Father, the Son and the Holy Trinity, one in substance and undivided."

Alexis, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Moscow, July 29, 1960.

EPS, Geneva

Next issue of the Ecumenical Press Service will appear on 23rd September, 1960.

